

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Foreign Relations be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Friday, December 22, 1995, between the first and second rollcall votes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

PRESIDENT CLINTON'S GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

• Mr. FAIRCLOTH. Mr. President, we are in the 7th day of a partial Government shutdown. The President is playing politics with this issue and he should stop it. He is trying to blame Congress for his failure to sign the legislation which would have averted this crisis. In addition, he is trying to divide the House freshmen and the House Republican leadership. And, he is trying to divide House and Senate Republicans. Such desperate tactics on his part are doomed to fail.

Yesterday, in a demonstration of solidarity, House Republicans—conservatives and moderates alike—told the Nation that the President's politics of division wouldn't work, that they remained united in our struggle against President Clinton's efforts to undermine a balanced budget agreement. More importantly, they rightly pointed the finger of blame for the partial Government shutdown directly at the White House.

Congress has sent three spending bills to the President which would have kept open the Departments of Veterans Affairs, HUD, Commerce, Justice, State, and Interior. What did President Clinton do? He vetoed all of these bills, and in so doing delayed benefits checks to our Nation's veterans. He had the power to prevent the shutdown of these agencies and to keep Federal workers on the job. Instead, with the stroke of a pen he sent thousands of Federal workers home during this holiday season.

The Congress did its job and passed appropriations bills which responsibly reduced Government spending and which would have kept agencies open. But, President Clinton wasn't interested in that. He was looking for a photo opportunity. He vetoed funding bills and closed down parts of the Government. He should be and will be held accountable for this shutdown.

Furthermore, workers at the Departments of Labor, HHS, and Education could be at the desks today if the Democrats would end the filibuster which they began in September.

When you look at the Government shutdown, the facts simply don't support the President's extremist rhetoric. In reality, this crisis has been engi-

neered by the President to bolster his reelection campaign. After being viewed as irrelevant for so long, the President has now identified himself with something he believes in passionately. He is passionate about spending—deficit spending. He is passionate about preserving the status quo which heaps trillions of dollars of debt on our children and grandchildren.

I hope that he will abandon his harsh scare tactics and get serious about balancing the budget. It was not until just a few days ago that he agreed to finally offer a balanced budget plan using honest numbers. He finally abandoned his preferred strategy of cooking the books as a way to balance the budget. Such policies won't lead to a balanced budget. They never have and they never will. President Clinton had chosen the path of certain failure. Congress rightly did not follow him down that dead-end road.

Although Congress has already passed legislation once to provide for veterans benefits, we have an opportunity today to overturn the President's action which cut off these funds. The men and women who have served our Nation in the armed services should not be used as a bargaining chip in this budget struggle between Congress and the President. I support the immediate restoration of funds for veteran benefits, and I hope that we will pass such legislation today.

Finally, I call upon the President to give America a Christmas present in the form of a balanced budget and a working Government. I call upon him to sign the funding bills which he has rejected, and I call upon him to help end the Democratic filibuster of the Labor, HHS appropriations bill. If the President wanted—all of this could be done before Christmas.●

MEDICARE REIMBURSEMENT TO THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

• Mr. INOUE. Mr. President, I join with my esteemed colleague from Texas Senator GRAMM, to introduce this bill for Medicare reimbursement to the Department of Defense [DOD] for care provided in our military medical treatment facilities to Medicare eligible beneficiaries. When these dedicated men and women made a commitment to a career of service in the Armed Forces, a promise was made to them that upon retirement they and their family members would continue to receive health care for life in our superb Military Health Services System [MHSS]—if they so chose. In fact, approximately 230,000 of the 1.2 million Medicare eligible retirees currently do choose to get their health care at military treatment facilities. Regrettably, as the military downsizes and Defense health budgets are cut, without Medicare reimbursement, the MHSS will no longer be able to provide health care for these retirees. Many of these retired servicemembers and their families made career-long sacrifices based

in part on the expectation that they would have guaranteed health care. I believe it is important that our Nation continue its firm commitment and honor the promises made to those individuals and their families.

Mr. President, this bill provides an additional benefit to the Nation—more cost effective health care for this population. If the MHSS can no longer provide their health care, 230,000 more retirees who are already Medicare eligible will be forced into the Medicare system—at a substantially higher cost than that for DOD reimbursement. As a taxpayer, this just makes good business sense.

Mr. President, these dedicated servicemembers kept their promise to our nation and now I believe it is right that the Nation keep its promise to them. This bill will enable the MHSS to continue to provide health care services to Medicare eligible retirees and their families as promised for those who choose to receive their care in our military facilities.●

THE AU PAIR PROGRAM

• Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, over the past several weeks, my office has received many telephone calls from concerned Minnesotans regarding the partial shutdown of the Federal Government and the lack of funding which has resulted for the program which brings nannies from foreign countries into America.

Nannies have been coming to the United States through the Au Pair program, a cultural exchange program run by the United States Information Agency (USIA) which oversees the matching of young people from abroad with American families in need of live-in babysitters.

Approximately 13,000 young adults have participated in this program over the years and 10,000 American families have benefitted from the helping hands these visiting babysitters provide. They are paid a weekly salary of \$115 plus room and board for their services.

When its appropriations expired at the end of the last fiscal year on September 30, the entire Au Pair program was put into limbo until it could be funded again. It had been included in three separate appropriations bills, but each has failed to become law due to objections over issues unrelated to the Au Pair program. On December 11, Senator HELMS recognized the pressing nature of the situation and introduced S. 1465, legislation funding and extending the Au Pair program for 2 years. The bill passed the Senate on December 13 and a related measure was introduced in the House that same day. It was passed by voice vote on December 18.

Late Wednesday night, this legislation was delivered to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. But now, 3 days later, it continues to sit on the President's desk awaiting his signature. Furthermore, while many families wait, there has been no indication yet as to whether the President will sign or veto this bill.